

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MPOL, GW

SUBJECT: CONFLICTING SIGNALS ON FRG'S

RESTRICTIVE ARMS SALES POLICY

REFS: (A) BONN 18699; (JB) (B) BONN 16648

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE ARE CONFLICTING INDICATIONS REGARDING THE FRG'S INTENTION TO MAINTAIN A RESTRICTIVE ARMS SALES POLICY. A RECENT STATEMENT BY SPD CHAIRMAN BRANDT SUPPORTED THE PARTY'S DECLARATORY POLICY AGAINST EASING RESTRICTIONS, BUT REPORTS PERSIST THAT THE GOVERNMENT EVENTUALLY MIGHT CHANGE ITS POLICY PRINCIPALLY FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. END SUMMARY.

1. TWO RECENTLY PUBLISHED INTERVIEWS WITH LEADING SPD POLITICIANS, INCLUDING PARTY CHAIRMAN BRANDT, HAVE REAFFIRMED THE PARTY'S POSITION NOT TO CONSIDER AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EASING OF RESTRICTIONS ON ARMS SALES AT THIS TIME. WILLY

WILLY BRANDT WAS QUITE CATEGORICAL IN DEALING WITH THE SUBJECT. BRANDT'S COMMENTS WERE CARRIED IN AN INTERVIEW WHICH APPEARED IN THE FRENCH PUBLICATION "LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR" AS FOLLOWS:

"I AND MY PARTY ARE COMPLETELY OPPOSED TO COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE SPHERE OF ARMS. AND, LET ME REPEAT, WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S RESTRICTIVE POLICY SHOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED."

2. SPD BUNDESTAG DEPUTY ERWIN HORN, WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE, ALSO TOOK MUCH THE SAME LINE IN A DEC. 15 RADIO INTERVIEW. HORN REFERRED TO THE DIFFICULTY IN DEFINING WHAT CONSTITUTED AN "AREA OF TENSION" AND TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT EXPANDED ARMS EXPORTS COULD BACKFIRE POLITICALLY.

3. HOWEVER, IN SPITE OF THE STATEMENTS REPORTED ABOVE, TWO NEWSPAPERS INDICATED LAST WEEK THAT THE FEDERAL SECURITY COUNCIL INTENDED TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE ON DEC. 15. ONE ARTICLE STATED THAT AN INFORMED OFFICIAL SAID THE SUBJECT WAS STILL HIGHLY SENSITIVE, AND THAT THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD NOT BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. ANOTHER OFFICIAL WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT THE POSITION OF THE LEFT WING OF THE SPD AS MANIFESTED AT THE MANNHEIM PARTY CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER (REF A) WAS NOT RELEVANT SINCE THE GOVERNMENT -- NOT THE PARTY -- TAKES DECISIONS.

4. COMMENT: THE FORCES WITHIN THE SPD OPPOSING EXPANDED FRG ARMS EXPORTS APPEAR TO HAVE PREVAILED FOR THE TIME BEING. WHILE IT SEEMED LAST SEPTEMBER THAT THE FRG WAS HEADING TOWARDS AN EASING OF RESTRICTIONS (REF B), THE INTERNAL PARTY DEBATE WHICH THE PROSPECTIVE POLICY CHANGE TRIGGERED LED EVENTUALLY TO THE SPD PASSING A RESOLUTION AGAINST EXPANDING ARMS EXPORTS. THE SPD PARTY NEWSPAPER "VORWAERTS" ALSO GOT INTO THE ACT TWO WEEKS AGO, ASKING RHETORICALLY IN A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE WHETHER CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTENDED TO RENEGE ON PREVIOUS STATEMENTS AGAINST EASING FRG ARMS EXPORTS RESTRICTIONS MADE WHEN HE WAS DEFENSE MINISTER.

5. THE DILEMMA POSED TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP NOW APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN RESOLVED AT THIS TIME IN FAVOR OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MORALISM RATHER THAN ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL EXPEDIENCY. AS LONG AS THE FRG MAINTAINS

ITS CURRENT RESTRICTIVE POLICY, THE POSSIBILITY OF
FUTURE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BETWEEN THE US AND FRG IN
COMPETING FOR ARMS SALES OUTSIDE OF THE ALLIANCE IS
ALSO LESSENER. HOWEVER, THE ISSUE OF EXPANDED GERMAN
ARMS EXPORTS REMAINS OPEN, AND IT IS NOT KNOWN WHEN A
FINAL DECISION WILL BE TAKEN BY THE FRG.
HILLENBRAND

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